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by Elizabeth Walling — 93 Comments | Updated: March 12, 2019 | This post contains affiliate links

Iodine and Acne: My Holy Grail Breakthrough for Clear Skin

So I spent two decades living with acne, searching for the holy grail solution that would end my battle. And then I found it. I never realized the connection between iodine and acne, but as soon as I tried iodine for acne I realized this was a huge missing link.



I'm intimately familiar with acne. It's been a constant companion (though not a welcome one) since I was twelve years old. I've spent almost two decades trying to get rid of my breakouts, without much success. Until now.

HOW I'VE TRIED TO STOP ACNE

Off the top of my head, here are just a few of the things I've tried over the years to fight the acne dragon:

- benzoyl peroxide (ProActiv and many others)
- salicylic acid
- glycolic acid peels

- tanning way too much (*sorry, skin*)
- antibiotics
- charcoal mask
- harsh soaps
- no soap
- washing with honey
- washing with tea
- apple cider vinegar
- low-carb diet
- low-fat diet
- no sugar diet
- washing my face more
- washing less
- petroleum jelly (*ew*)

- coconut oil
- Vitamin A
- hormone replacement therapy
- tons of other vitamins, minerals, and herbs

I could go on, actually, but it's starting to get ridiculous.

FAVORITE RECIPES

[How to Make Homemade Taco Seasoning Mix \(Gluten-Free + w/ Turmeric!\)](#)





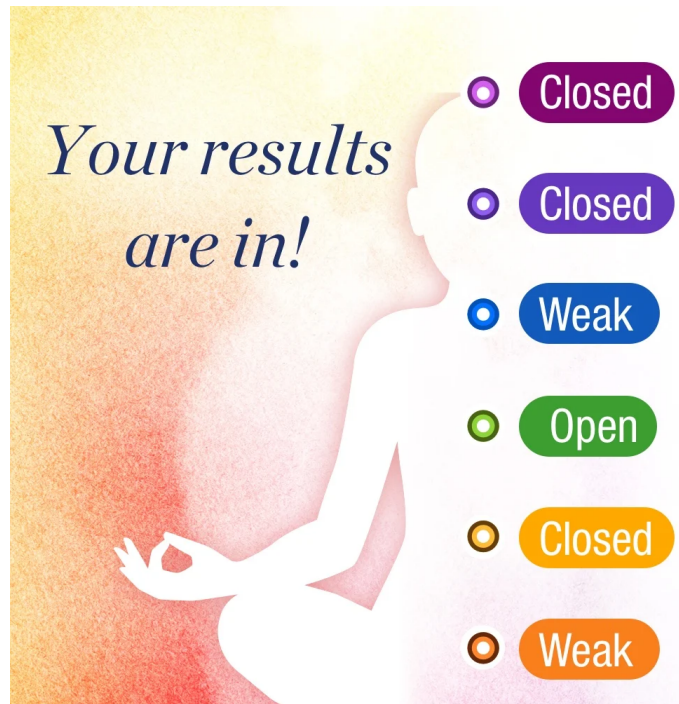
Not all of this stuff is bad. Things like a good [DIY charcoal mask](#) and coconut oil are still staples in my skincare regimen. And eating a generally balanced diet is always a good idea for your skin!

But the truth was, sometimes my acne would clear up for a few weeks for no reason. Even while I was eating junk food like crazy and barely taking care of my skin! And then it would return, also for no apparent reason.

Sometimes maintaining a low-stress lifestyle and decent eating habits really helped... sometimes not so much.

OPERATION ACNE DESPERATION

Last year, I was at the end of my rope. I didn't know what was going on with my skin. I was so, so, so tired of having acne all the time.

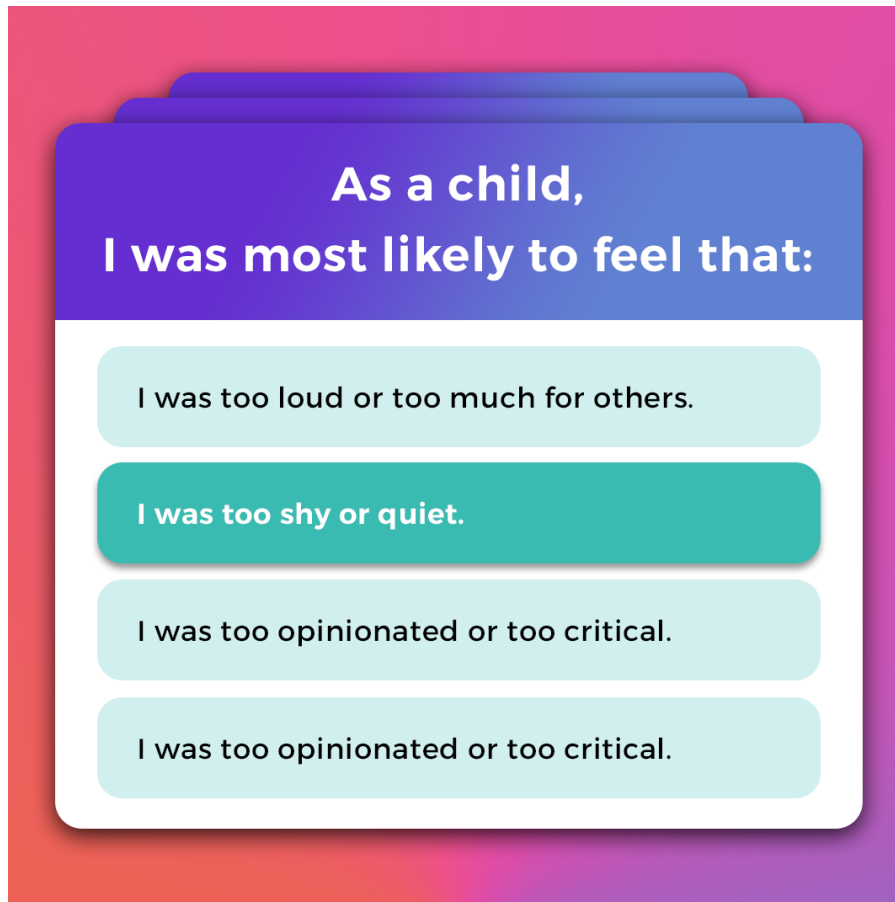


Plus, it was getting worse. Painful cysts were popping up all around my jawline. It was impossible to hide them with makeup, and they would hurt for at least a week. Every morning I'd wake up with a new, aching lump. It was miserable.

I did so much research on hormones and androgens and PCOS... I had a lot of puzzle pieces, but nothing would line up.

I was crazy desperate.

So I tried two things I never thought I'd go for:



- In late 2015, I started using Retin-A cream.
- In early 2016, I cut all dairy out of my diet.

Y'all know I love milk, right? I'm the [milk diet lady](#), after all. But I didn't even blink when I gave it up. I was willing to do anything (hence the so-not-natural Retin-A cream!!).

But even with these drastic measures, it *maybe* resulted in a 50% improvement.

All this, for 50% results?!

Ugh.



ENTER AN OLD BLOGGING BUDDY

By a stroke of luck, in February an old friend, Melissa Gardner, looked me up and sent me an email.

She said, “Hey, remember back when we were blogging buddies? I wrote this book on everything I researched and I’d love some feedback.”

I was excited for Melissa and decided to take a look. She warned me: it was a long book, so we agreed if it took me a few months to get through it, no problem.

The second I started reading, I couldn't stop.

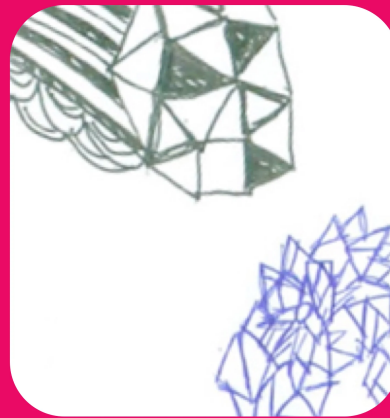
PERSONALITY QUIZ:

**MY DOODLES
LOOK LIKE:**

A.



B.



I flew through page after page, diving into more health information in a few days than I had in two years!

I emailed Melissa and told her, "This is amazing!! I'm making changes right now and will let you know how it goes."

Here's what I learned and what I did:

THE END OF ACNE

I'm not one for conspiracy theories. I'm up for the occasional controversy, but evidence is a staple around here. That's one of the reasons I found [The Hidden Cause of Acne](#) so compelling. To say Melissa did her research is a massive understatement. I was blown away (not a statement I use often) by the depth of the information in this book.

I can't even begin to cover what I learned in [this book](#), but I will try to give you the relevant cliff notes.

MELISSA'S STORY

Melissa is a researcher at heart and professionally. So when she noticed strange patterns in her breakouts, moods, and other symptoms, she just had to know why. It took her a long time to find the answer, but what she uncovered was HUGE.

She found that acne, hypothyroidism, and depression (as well as other health issues) all seemed to be linked to two halogens:

fluoride and iodine. Or more accurately, *too much* fluoride and *not enough* iodine.

How do fluoride and iodine influence each other?

“Iodine and fluorine are located at opposite ends of the halogen group. Since iodine is the heaviest of the halogens found in the human body (and the heaviest of all elements needed by living organisms), it loses out to other halogens that compete for the same receptors. When we have high amounts of fluoride in our diets, especially when iodine is lacking, our bodies absorb fluoride where they would normally absorb iodine.” – [The Hidden Cause of Acne](#)

THE FLUORIDE STORY

Most of us think of the fluoride in our water and toothpaste, but it shows up in all kinds of places. Like raisins and wine (from pesticides, believe it or not).

So although researchers have told us how much fluoride is “safe” in our drinking water, we can actually easily be exposed to an abundance of fluoride from our food and dental products, too. It all adds up!

I like to think of the body as being pretty adaptable, but too much is *just too much*. And Melissa convinced me that our bodies can easily be overloaded with fluoride from all these sources. She explained in great detail how common foods like milk, grains, and tea have become sources of fluoride because of modern farming and food production methods.

(If you're curious *which* foods are highest in fluoride, check out [this list](#). It's easy to see how you can ingest WAY too much very easily. Consider that the World Health Organization notes 6mg/day of fluoride is enough to *seriously increase risk of bone fracture* – [read more here](#).)

THE IODINE STORY

(I flipping love history, so this part of Melissa's book fascinated me. I will try to remain calm and not get too geeky here.)

Long ago, when humans first decided to spread across the globe, they did so by following the coastline – and taking advantage of the rich sea life as a primary food source. Some researchers believe that eating all that awesome seafood is what helped the human brain develop into the intelligent machine it is today.

Seafood (and foods by the sea) are rich in many important nutrients, but in this discussion, one in particular stands out:

Iodine.

And, if you look at traditional diets over the entire planet, they all tend to be rich in iodine.

My point? *Humans need iodine.* Quite possibly a lot more than we've been recommending in recent years. (To learn more about the importance of iodine, I highly recommend the book [Iodine: Why You Need It, Why You Can't Live Without It.](#))

IODINE AND ACNE: WHAT I DID

I could spend several thousand more words going into detail about the *how* and *why* of iodine, fluoride, and acne. But others

have honestly done a much better job than I could. Definitely read [The Hidden Cause of Acne](#) to learn why I did the following crazy things:

I got a reverse osmosis filter for our drinking water.

I ordered a handy [water tester](#) after reading Melissa's book. It doesn't tell you how much fluoride is there, but it does tell you the level of "solids" in your water. I was curious to see how our numbers looked. Our tap water tested at around 290ppm (above 500 is considered unsafe). Then I tested our filtered water — 275ppm.

Then I got crazy and tested the water in our toilet and turtle tank — *both were cleaner than my filtered water!!*

I ordered a reverse osmosis filter right then and there. ([This is the one I got.](#)) After that, my water tested at 50ppm or lower, so I was happy.

I watched my intake of high fluoride foods.

Less wine, less tea, less fruit juice, and fewer raisins are in my life now. I actually eat more dairy, however. Earlier this year, I cut it out, but after reading Melissa's insights on *why* dairy can be an issue, I've added more dairy back into my diet without issues (I just make sure it's really high quality when I do).

I don't obsess about avoiding fluoride in my food. Instead, I just cut back on obvious sources when I can, because I know even a little bit, makes a difference.

I started taking iodine supplements.

I had never fully grasped the connection between iodine and acne before reading this book. I've taken iodine before without side effects — I just never stuck with it — so I knew I wouldn't have overwhelming detox effects (iodine displaces icky halogens like fluoride and bromide, which can sometimes lead to detox symptoms). I still started small, with 1/2 of an [Iodoral tablet](#) every day.

After some time I switched to [Lugol's 5% drops](#) because it's easier to regulate the dosage up and down each day. I put 1 drop in my

coffee smoothie each morning. Every week or two, I started adding another drop, until I'd worked up to 4 drops each day (or 25 mg). I've stayed at this dosage for a few months now (more than that leads to detox symptoms for me).

For some reason, I feel the drops work better for me. I don't know if they're more easily absorbed or if it's just easier for me to get the dosage right. Your mileage may vary.

IODINE AND ACNE: MY RESULTS

For the past 18 years, my skin has never been more than 80% clear. Even that would never last long.

**Now, I would consider my skin 95-97% clear most of the time.
My worst days are 80% clear.**

Before, I would experience at least one bad breakout every week. Just as it would start clearing up, I'd be hit with another wave of pimples. The older I got, the more these tended to be large and painful.

Now, I get an occasional pimple. They're always small and never painful anymore. In the past 7 months since trying iodine for acne, I've had what I'd consider a "breakout" *maybe* twice. And even that was very mild in comparison to what I used to experience.

Makeup takes me about two minutes now because there's nothing to worry about covering up. I've even been known to leave the house *without makeup* lately (NEVER would have happened before — and yes, those all-caps were necessary!!).

For the first time in many, many years, *I love my skin*. This feeling is unfamiliar and overwhelming to me, even though my skin has been clear for months now.

After two decades of acne, it's really gone. I still can't believe it.

And that's why I had to share this with you.

DOES IODINE CAUSE ACNE?

There's a pervasive myth floating around that iodine consumption *causes* acne. There's a kernel of truth to this (more on that in a moment), but when you start gathering data, the opposite tends

to be true. Unfortunately, no one studies this much anymore. But here's an interesting piece of information:

“In 1961, about ten years after most cities in North Carolina started fluoridating their water supply, two researchers from the University of North Carolina conducted a study to compare the rates of acne between adolescents who eat a lot of seafood on the coast, and those in the mountainous western region of the state where a diet rich in seafood and therefore iodine is less common. The results of their study were not what anyone expected. The adolescents who consumed more iodine had less acne.” – [The Hidden Cause of Acne](#)

But some people *do* experience more acne when they start supplementing with iodine. Why?

Melissa's studies led her to an important theory: as iodine naturally displaces the excess fluoride in our systems, symptoms of that fluoride can increase. That means you can break out when you start taking iodine.

And that leads us to an important tip: start slow!

If you want to try iodine for acne, you want to start at a very low dosage and slowly work your way up, backing off a little if detox symptoms start. What I started with might be too much for you. Be cautious and listen to your body.

You also need to be taking supportive nutrients like vitamin C, magnesium and selenium to assist this process. This is all described in detail in the book [Iodine: Why You Need It, Why You Can't Live Without It](#).

RESOURCES FOR USING IODINE FOR ACNE:

First and foremost, I highly recommend reading Melissa's book [The Hidden Cause of Acne](#). It's a deep book, but oh so worth it. Plus, Melissa's sense of humor (and love for Disney movies) really shines through and makes for an entertaining read.

Next, consider a quality [reverse osmosis filtration system](#). They are much more affordable than they used to be, and make a huge

difference in the quality of water you drink.

Then, get familiar with iodine supplementation with the book [Iodine: Why You Need It, Why You Can't Live Without It](#). I don't recommend jumping into taking iodine without knowing the details first.

Last, check out the testimonials about [Iodoral tablets](#) and [Lugol's solutions](#). Then you can make an educated decision about whether iodine is right for you. Consider talking with a physician who's well-versed in iodine therapy. It can really help to have a professional guiding you along the way.

This is a really unique approach to resolving acne, so I encourage you to be informed and follow your intuition as you learn more.

Do you have a victorious story about conquering your acne? Tell me in the comments below!

More of our best posts:

- [Does coconut oil REALLY help with acne?](#)

- Raw Honey Mask for Acne
- DIY Charcoal Mask to Detox Skin
- Best DIY Toner for Acne Prone Skin
- Turmeric Milk Soap Recipe
- How to Make Healing Calendula Oil
- Homemade Mouthwash
- DIY 1-Ingredient Cough “Syrup”

Elizabeth Walling

Elizabeth is the founder of *The Nourished Life* and has been writing about natural living for 12 years. Her work has been featured at Shape, Bustle, and Mother Earth Living. Her mission is to help you lower your stress levels and find fun ways to become happier and healthier. [Read more about Elizabeth here.](#)